

# photo access

29 Jan - 28 Feb

## *ecologies (Arctic)*

**Michele Barker + Anna Munster**

An aerial drone hovers precariously close to the face of an Arctic glacier. Metres below, an underwater drone engages in 'oceanic' hovering.

Skating along the surface of the Arctic Ocean, the aerial drone navigates air currents and senses the chatter of sea ice and terns' cries. Underneath and close-up, an iceberg slowly dissolves in view.

While the aerial drone records the dripping water and calving events from the glacier's seemingly solid ice wall, the underwater drone is witness to a different but related temporal transition. Here, centuries-old air, soil, bacteria and more—trapped within the melting icebergs calved from the glacier— are rapidly releasing into the sea.

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*ecologies (Arctic)* is a multichannel video, audio and generativeAI installation, comprising visual elements shot on location in the Arctic Circle with aerial and underwater drones, and additional AI generated image-to-video channels. The audioscapes are immersive environments composed of Arctic circle field recordings and melodic fragments and generativeAI voice synthesis and sound also features. The work centres on the land/ice mass of Spitsbergen in the archipelago of Svalbard, one of the northernmost Arctic regions. At Spitsbergen's southernmost tip, a large glacial mass connects the west coast (Hornsund) to the east coast (Hambergbukta). The glacier has retreated 17 kilometres in the past 100 years. At this rate, it will melt entirely within 35 years, and the island of Spitsbergen will be split in two. There are environmental and geopolitical consequences of such glacial melt: sea levels will rise globally; salinity levels will change marine currents and may eradicate species; millennial-old bacteria and viruses with unknown pathologies will be released; new

shipping lanes will open, and territory will be fought over.

As a result of an Arctic Circle residency in 2023, we were granted permission to use drones to film above and below surfaces of the glacier, where ice calving is occurring at an alarming rate. Working against the dominance of the aerial drone's "God's eye" view of climate change events, our cinematic techniques of 'terrain hugging' enabled the drones to hover close to surfaces, creating moving image with haptic-like qualities. Against the cliff faces of Spitsbergen, our drones caress the glacier's and the ocean's textured facades, while under the ice floes the drone became entangled in micro moments of deglaciation.

The experimental drone audiovisuals are joined by another, speculative 'companion' perspective: AI-generated video. A counterpoint to the drones bearing witness to ecologies of climate change, this speculative imaging asks: what might a deglaciated Arctic look like in the year 2058; 2058 being the predicted forecast for the loss of the Hambergreen glacier. Displayed on older CRT monitors, the generative AI elements collapse past, present and future modes of 'seeing' planetary environmental crisis and probe what it means to image an impending time that is already imploding.

*ecologies (Arctic)* forms part of the larger *ecologies of duration* project that the artists initiated in 2019. Working with sensing technologies to 'witness' sites and events of human-made environmental crisis, the project invents novel techniques to affectively register Earth's more-than-human durations and movements.

## Bio

**Michele Barker + Anna Munster** are established award-winning media artists and researchers. Their work has been shown extensively in venues such as The Art Gallery of NSW, The Science Museum, Detroit, and the Museum of Art, Seoul. They have created works spanning the media arts landscape over a 30-year period, focusing on experimental cinema and acoustic environments to explore the multifaceted complexities of human and more than human perception, movement and duration. Their body of work develops a unique audiovisual language using cinematographic, editing and sonic compositional techniques that deliver new kinds of embodied viewing experiences.

Website: [sensesofperception.info](http://sensesofperception.info)

Instagram: @sensesofperception

## List of works

from left to right

1.  
Michele Barker + Anna Munster  
*In the blink of an A(eye)*, 2024-6  
3 channel generativeAI installation with CRT monitors  
dimensions variable  
Endless loop  
\$5,000

2.  
Michele Barker + Anna Munster  
*ecologies (Arctic), threshold*, 2024  
2 channel audio and video installation  
dimensions variable  
Endless loop  
\$10,000

3.  
Michele Barker + Anna Munster  
*floe*, 2026  
2 channel audio and video installation  
dimensions variable  
Endless loop  
\$8,000

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